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MARCO
THE GYPSY ELF

MADGE L. PATTESON



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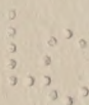
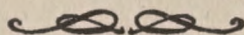
MARCO, THE GYPSY ELF

Marco, the Gypsy Elf

SHORT STORIES FOR CHILDREN

BY

MADGE L. PATTESON



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To the
Memory of Little Kenneth

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THE MISCHIEF MAKER

SYLVAS, King of Elfland, was in a high state of indignation. The cause of his mood was plain to anyone who chanced to pass through his dominions. Some mischievous elf was in serious danger by thus incurring the royal displeasure.

The trouble was noticeable everywhere.

It began early that morning when a company of aggrieved caterpillars appeared before the little monarch with the announcement that their nest had been invaded the night before, and the hair of each unoffending caterpillar had been neatly rolled in curl papers. These curl papers they had not been able to get off and, as the King could see, it forced them to present a most ridiculous appearance before the public.

It is true that nothing else in the nest had been molested but the prank was unpardonable. No sooner had the King soothed their ruffled feelings and promised to right their wrongs, than a hornet appeared with a white face and flashing eyes, with a similar story. On awaking that same morning he found himself tied head to tail, and when he tried to liberate himself he stung himself with his own sting. Someone was guilty of this fresh outrage. Several black imps next came on the scene. They told a weird tale of a strange elf man who had appeared before their tree bark

bungalow in the middle of the night. He forced them at the point of a bee sting sword to whistle a tune and dance the fox trot to their own music while he beat upon a tambourine. They failed to identify him because he wore a spotted kerchief tied about the lower part of his face, leaving only his eyes uncovered.

When the imps had retailed their complaint the Lord High Chamberlain of Elfland entered with solemn countenance and offended dignity. This worthy elf said never a word, but the expression of his face was eloquent. Two of his personal attendants followed him and bent the knee before the throne of King Sylvas.

Scenting new trouble the little monarch inquired the cause of the Lord High Chamberlain's haughty look.

Suddenly, and without any warning, at this question both the little attendants fell to laughing. Their laughter could not be restrained although they realized the personal danger to themselves that this rude behavior in the presence of royalty would bring upon them. In vain did they place their tiny hands over their mouths, in vain did they hide their faces, the laughter would not be denied. At last they held their sides and roared in the face of the whole court.

The King lifted amazed eyes, the Lord High Chamberlain still stood in frozen dignity, the ladies and gentlemen of the court frowned ominously.

"Sirs," thundered Sylvas in kingly wrath, "explain this unseemly mirth. We asked you to state the grievance of your master, the Lord High Chamberlain, and you laugh! Such impertinence

was never known before in the whole of our kingdom."

Frightened into silence the two elves prostrated themselves before the throne, and one began in soft, apologetic tones to tell the cause of their merriment: "Sire, we mean no harm, but our master has been grievously insulted."

"Your master insulted," said the King, "and you are amused?"

"No—no, Sire, pardon—but we did not laugh at the insult. We are deeply incensed, but, Your Majesty, some villain last night did paste a bit of thistledown on the chi-chi-chin"—but here both elves burst out laughing again. "Your Majesty, we implore your patience, but the amusement is in us and must come out. Some outcast villain, some criminal—words fail me to express the outrage—but while the Chamberlain slept some intruder entered his apartment and pasted some flowing thistledown upon his noble cheeks and chin. When he arose this morning our most worthy master supposed that he had grown a beautiful beard in the night. He felt very proud and with occasion; but, oh Sire, it was his expression when he washed this morning. He washed his noble face and—and the beard came off!"

At the end of this recital the Lord High Chamberlain turned an uncomfortable red but, in spite of his embarrassment, a slow grin spread over his crestfallen face.

Sylvas coughed behind his kingly hand, then began to chuckle softly. The chuckle grew and grew until the entire court followed suit. Peel after peel of elfin laughter echoed through the

palace halls. "Well! well!" exclaimed the King. "Sirs, we cannot blame you. The incident, if outrageous, was a most amusing one. It must have been a funny sight. Why—we laugh ourself. Nevertheless the author of these outrages shall be punished. Let it be proclaimed throughout the realm that Sylvas goes in person to find the offender. Prepare a fleet-winged moth for our service."

Immediately hurried preparations for the King's man hunt were made.

The greatest excitement prevailed throughout the land, and for days the moth was kept on the wing while the King searched high and low.

Finally one bright night the moon being full, Sylvas and his train of attendant elves chanced on a gypsy encampment. The camp was located quite on the border of Elfland, overlooking the dominion of Queen Florita of Fairyland. The kingdoms adjoined and the group of inverted althea blooms forming the tents was exactly on the dividing line. One tent was larger than any of the others and faintly tinged with rose color, while all the rest were snow white.

A tiny fire burned before this tent with an acorn cup pot hung on crossed twigs above it.

A birch bark wagon with a canopy formed of the petal of a water lily stood under a sheltering toad stool. Gypsy-elves in elfin dress of green and brown with flower petal kerchiefs on their heads and earrings in their ears were in groups about the camp. Some were singing, some sleeping and one tinkled music on a tiny banjo.

A sign in front of the large tent advertised in elfin letters where fortunes could be told. The

little king and his followers were very tired and their search thus far had proved unsuccessful. They decided to stop with the gypsies awhile and rest. On discovering who their distinguished guest was, there was much commotion and excitement in the camp and the gypsy-elves dispatched a messenger to the large tent to notify the king of the gypsy-elves that his own sovereign was come to visit him.

Sylvas seated himself among his followers very informally on the ground and looked with interest toward the tent of the gypsy ruler.

Almost immediately the curtains of the tent were lifted and there appeared before the surprised courtiers a tiny elf man of perhaps an inch in height. He wore a doublet and hose of dark green ivy. Over this was a loose cloak of the same hue, with wide flowing sleeves. On his head was knotted a kerchief made of the mottled petal of a tiger lily, from one side of which drooped a red feather taken from the downy head of a woodpecker. His hair reached his shoulder in a black, flowing mass and at his side he wore a bee sting for a sword.

On seeing his sovereign, Marco, the gypsy-elf, lifted his kerchief-cap from his head and swept the scarlet feather on the ground in greeting. He fell on his knee and kissed the hand of the little ruler, then turning it over, palm upward, studied its lines interestedly.

Throughout the whole proceeding he had not spoken a word, but now lifted his charming face and, with a smile of warmest affection and deference, murmured "Welcome!"

From this moment the small gypsy had the

attention of his courtly guests. All grouped themselves about him, holding out their palms to be read, or questioning him about his wandering life. Sylvas, however, was not yet ready to be entertained. Instead, he ordered the elves back to their seats until he could make Marco acquainted with their business in the camp. In a few words he told of the search in which they were engaged and stated in no uncertain terms the punishment that would be meted out to the criminal when he was found. Marco showed deep concern at the story of the elf's misdeeds and promised to aid them in their hunt.

After this they partook of a picnic dinner with the gypsy-elves, eating from a maple leaf tablecloth spread on the ground.

Marco then took the banjo from the hands of the musical elf. Playing a lively air, he danced a marvelous whirling dance, ending by throwing the instrument back to its owner, and going through a series of acrobatic movements so rapidly as to almost take away the breath of his audience.

The courtiers laughed and clapped their hands and the King vowed to have Marco often at court after this as chief entertainer.

The gypsy-elf bowed graceful acknowledgment of their applause; then again falling on his knees before the king, he began to tell his fortune.

The elves were enchanted.

Never had so winning an elf nor so interesting a gypsy come into their lives.

He began: "Your Majesty, your hand is fine and strong; the hand of a wise ruler, a sincere friend, an honorable judge, a merciful elf. Yes,

mercy is there and gentleness and forgiveness. You have a sense of humor. You appreciate the difference between mischief and meanness, between pranks and crimes.

"I see in your royal palm, O King, wise and noble, I see the name of the reckless elf for whom you are searching, the author of all the crimes. His name, Your Majesty, is the name of a brother ruler, Marco, king of the gypsy-elves." With these words Marco cast his eyes mournfully on the ground and bowed his head as if awaiting sentence. Perhaps, if Sylvas had been more observant, he might have seen a mischievous twinkle in the corners of these same eyes and an amused quiver around the mouth. If the King had taken this trouble he might have suspected that the gypsy's contrition was not above suspicion.

Sylvas heard only the words and, at the name of the fugitive he and the courtiers sprang to their feet; the gypsy-elves hurried up, but stood somewhat in the background. "What! You?" cried the King. "You dared insult the Lord High Chamberlain of the realm with a practical joke; to impose on ignorant imps; to practice cruelty on our friends, the insects, and then defy us to our face? Villain, you shall pay dearly. Beware!"

Marco waited until this outburst was over, then with his winsome manner spoke again in his musical, elfin tones: "Pardon, but I saw the cruel hornet sting a mortal infant, too young to defend itself. I merely fastened him head to tail to let him see how it felt. As for the imps," here he gave a gleeful laugh, "they were required to do only

what Your Majesty was pleased to find amusing when I did it myself a while ago. I urged them to dance to their own music. Surely, these are no crimes. It is but nature to dance to music. The caterpillars and the noble Chamberlain were not insulted, for since when was ever elf or reptile averse to being made more beautiful? With careful attention to the details of the toilet both curls and beard might have been retained. I bear a charmed life, Your Majesty. Punishment has ever failed with me. See—I have taken the precaution to have my tent poles made of a wish bone, while behold!" Here Marco sprang lightly to his feet and spread his arms wide apart, allowing his cloak to completely cover him. "My cloak is a four-leaved clover for good luck—but I delay you. Doubtless there are even now matters of state demanding your attention. One moment more, while King Sylvas and his train remain our honored guests. There is one other item to add to the fortune—your good fortune, Sire. Elfland has a neighbor, beauteous and fair, Florita, Queen of the fairies. In the royal palm of my sovereign I see an alliance of kingdoms, and fortunes, and hearts. I see hands joined in wedlock—one hand is the bronze one of Elfland's King; the other is small and white. Long life and good luck to the King from the wearer of the lucky leaf, the pardoned criminal who is really not a criminal, from Marco the gypsy-elf and all his band." His last words were almost lost in the simultaneous cheer from courtiers and gypsies.

King Sylvas smiled a forgiving, indulgent smile. He arose, giving himself a little shake, like one awakening from a dream or perhaps a maze

of fascination. He signaled his followers to prepare for departure and mounted the back of a moth. Turning toward Marco and once more holding out his hand, this time in pardon, he said: "You have given us a great idea to-day, a suggestion that shall linger in our mind, we trust, to some purpose. Ah, Marco, if you were not such an imp of an elf, we should call you our Good Fairy!"



*Santa Claus and Marco had a cozy talk, while the fire
blazed up the chimney and the North
Wind roared outside.*

MARCO AND SANTA CLAUS

THE journey seemed long to Marco, the gypsy-elf. For days and nights he had flown on dainty wings amid biting winds, over snow covered lands, clad only in fairy garb of flower petals and wrapped in a mantle of thistle-down. His body shivered with cold, for, you see, he was quite small enough to ride around in a walnut shell or on the back of a butterfly. Now here he was away up in Santa Claus land, where the darkness of night reigned half the year, alone, and still flying. At last, glancing downward, he saw a very tall old man coming out of a grove of the prettiest trees Marco had ever seen. The old man had a round purple face, and icicles powdered with snow grew all over his head like hair.

He walked along rapidly, puffing fierce breaths before him as he came. Controlling his shivering as best he could, Marco descended rapidly and alighted directly in the path of the queer old man.

Marco discovered, however, that to remain here was impossible, as the man's breath was so very violent that the tiny body of the elf would be instantly blown back whence it came. This catastrophe he had no intention of allowing to take place, so he bound himself tightly to the branch of a shrub, put out his wand and stopped the old fellow exactly where he was. The man was much astonished and stared around, high and

low, to discover the power that had caused him to pause. At last, tied to the shrub just before him, he espied Marco. "Oh," he cried, frowning darkly, "so it was you, was it?" And he looked very angry.

"Pray, who and what are you, who dares to impede the progress of the North Wind himself?"

Marco took off his cap and, bowing rather grandly for an elf, said: "I am a gentleman, which is more than can be said of the North Wind, it seems. I introduce to you Marco, the gypsy-elf. I am journeying to the home of Santa Claus, and by some mischance I have lost my way. This Santa Claus, they tell me, is a 'jolly old elf' who showers gifts on good children at the Christmas time. Now, I have inquired all over Elfland, and not one of our people has ever known an elf who answers this description. Where is his home? Does he inhabit flower cup or tree top? Is he so tall as I, or one-half so clever?"

When Marco had finished this long speech the North Wind, having regained his good humor, laughed loud and long. It seemed funny that anyone could be so ignorant of dear old Saint Nick. He then explained to the elf that in addition to being the North Wind he was also postmaster of the Kriss Kringle Postoffice, and as it was now time for the Santa Claus mail, he would himself conduct Marco to his destination.

Then throwing his great head up in the air he blew forth several terrific gusts, and instantly what appeared to be a terrible snowstorm came falling over their heads. Great white flakes fell in all directions. The gusts were repeated at intervals for several minutes, and then suddenly

the storm ceased, and the postmaster ran hither and thither, gathering up the flakes and putting them in a huge mail bag at his side.

He told the elf that the snowstorm was made up of the letters to Santa Claus sent up the chimneys by children all over the world.

"But," cried Marco, "if Santa Claus is an elf, how can he read those great letters, in any one of which I could hide away?" The North Wind chuckled once more and then agreed to conduct Marco instantly to the home of Saint Nick, where he could satisfy all the curiosity that he seemed to feel.

Placing the elf inside his fur cap band, the North Wind rushed away through the grove. Thus Marco's attention was again called to the unusual beauty of the trees. They were of cedar, fir and pine, with long extra leaves made of stockings large and small. They bore wonderful fruit of toys and dolls and tinkling Christmas bells.

On the larger branches were large, deep-toned bells, while smaller branches bore the smaller bells.

Up in the air above their heads were myriad lights like fireflies, but the North Wind explained that these were but sparks from the stars, which, in falling, had been frozen, light and all, and formed vari-colored Christmas candles to adorn the trees to-morrow.

As they journeyed, graceful, long-antlered reindeer ran in and out among the trees, while under a great snow shed the gypsy-elf discovered a sleigh of gigantic dimensions. Below some of the

trees were hung great bags which caught the ripened toys as the wind swayed the branches.

"Filling Santa Claus's packs," explained the North Wind, and then with a last puff they arrived before a queer house. The house was built in the form of an enormous brick chimney, with no door or opening at the side. The entrance door was in the roof and, had it not been for the fact that the Chimney House had a chimney of its own, it would have been hard to discover that it was a house at all. Yet it was a house, and the home of Santa Claus!

The North Wind extricated the little adventurer, and taking him in his fingers blew him gently into the air like a bit of thistledown, indeed. The elf floated softly upward and dropped through the entrance door, and Postmaster North Wind threw the mail bag in just behind him. Now, as it was Christmas Eve and Santa Claus had a hard night's work before him, he was taking a last doze in front of a big log fire when Marco entered. It was not until the elf fell plump on Santa's nose that the old fellow ever aroused. The thistledown cape tickled Santa Claus's nose and he gave a big sneeze, which blew the elf down on his thick gray beard. "Flies are mighty bad for Christmas," said Santa Claus, and off he dozed again without once opening his eyes.

The elf came near getting lost in Santa's beard and his feet kept getting all tangled up, but he finally managed to climb to the mouth, and this tickled the good saint's lip until he opened his mouth and coughed and puffed equal to the North Wind himself.

"Shoo, fly!" said Santa Claus, arousing ever

so little, only to doze away once more. At this Marco lost patience, and crawling on his hands and knees up Santa Claus's face, he laid hold on the saint's eyelashes and opened one of his eyes by main force.

"Fly, indeed!" said Marco, indignantly. Hearing a voice, Santa Claus sat up, rubbing his eyes and tumbling the elf heels over head in the air. Marco alighted on Saint Nick's broad chest, and seating himself on one of the buttons of the big fur jacket he said disgustedly: "Not an elf at all."

"Wait a bit," cried Santa Claus merrily. "Who are you, my little friend?" So Saint Nicholas and Marco had a "cozy talk while the fire blazed up the chimney of the Chimney House and the North Wind roared outside.

The elf discovered that even if Santa was not one of the elfin band, he was about the kindest, cheeriest old soul in the world.

Afterward they read the mail together, the elf perched on the shoulder of the saint. They became such fast friends that it was decided that Marco should remain over for Christmas with Santa Claus. The matter being settled, Marco and the North Wind went out and assisted Saint Nick in preparing for his trip. The Wind gathered the packs, uprooted Christmas trees and loaded the big sleigh. Santa Claus called the reindeer and the elf plucked tiny sleigh bells off the smallest trees and attached them to every pronged antler.

Then Saint Nicholas, wrapped in fur, with the largest pack strapped to his back, climbed into the sleigh, waved his hand gaily to Marco, called

to the reindeer and was off on his mission of cheer to all the world. Then a certain old rhyme ran persistently through Marco's brain:

"One day old Saint Nicholas made a complaint:
'To me 'tis quite plain why they call me a saint;
For I, who make presents to ever so many,
Am the only poor fellow who never gets any.'"

This must not be, he decided, and, between them, he and the North Wind planned a surprise for Santa Claus. The surprise was such a very big surprise that Marco needed all the elves and fairies to assist him.

The North Wind agreed to send special gusts to Fairyland and Elfland that would waft the tiny folk here in the twinkling of an eye. So off he hurried, puffing and blowing. My! what a merry, disheveled band they were when they came. Every little curl awry, every tiny cheek windblown and rosy from the hurried trip. How they laughed and how merrily they joined in Marco's plan. Not a gauzy wing but was tireless, not a heart but beat full of good wishes for jolly Saint Nick.

A great many of the largest stockings were pulled, and these, the willing fingers wove together into one big stocking quite as large as Santa's pack. This stocking they hung outside from the roof of the Chimney House and piled it high with beautiful gifts that fairy fingers alone could fashion — robes of eiderdown for his sleigh, new harness for the reindeer, and a cap and gloves lined with their own thistledown. Inside, the Chimney House was garlanded with greenery, holly and mistletoe decking all the

place. Christmas candles were plucked from the frozen atmosphere and placed on every tree in the grove, all alight and sparkling.

A special yule log was brought up by the North Wind while bonfires of pine knots glowed at the end of every pathway. Around the big stocking were other garlands studded with frozen dew drops, while icicles combined to form fantastic pictures in the tree tops.

At the entrance to the grove several fir trees, bare of gifts, were uprooted and fastened one upon another to form a gigantic tree.

This was covered immediately with a crystal mantle of ice and festooned with garlands of feathery snow by the ever-accommodating North Wind.

On every leaf and branch of the tree stood a bright faced elf with star sparks held aloft in each tiny hand, and because there were so many elves they quite covered the tree.

Thus when Santa Claus's sleigh appeared returning home his eyes were greeted by a most beauteous sight, the light in every hand reflecting back myriad glistening rays from the ice mantle robing the tree.

Then the North Wind blew violently and the bells on every illumined tree pealed forth the Christmas chimes. Santa Claus was receiving a rousing welcome. The reindeer caught the spirit and tossed their graceful heads, adding the tinkle of sleigh bells to the mellow tones of the others.

The musicians among the elves floated down from the tree top and settled themselves all over the backs of the reindeer, and sang Christmas carols as only elves can sing. Yet another band

of wee folk danced gaily on the ground, waving their wands and cheering for Saint Nick.

Then you should have seen the fun when Santa Claus and all the elves and fairies in a body reached the Chimney House and found the big stocking. Marco was swinging to the toe and waving a tiny banner with the words: "Santa Claus's Own Christmas" written upon it. How the saint's old eyes danced and how he laughed and clapped his big hands—and what do you think?

When they all went inside the house and found the Christmas garlands, Santa Claus stretched forth his hand, and catching the Fairy Queen as she fluttered near, kissed her under the mistletoe.

THE KATY-DIDN'T

MARCO lay dozing in his tent. Of course he had no real home, but as he must rest and sleep somewhere he, like other gypsies, slept in a tent. His tent was made of an inverted calla lily bell and his couch of dried violet petals. Beneath his head was a pillow which was nothing more than a velvet rose petal spread over a bit of thistle down.

Dear me, but he was sleepy, for he had danced and reveled with other elves for most of the night and he was just getting into a good sleep when there came such a sound as would prop open the eyes of a stone man.

The sound was a long, quivering sob. Now, a sob under any circumstances is distressing, and tears desperate things to see. This sob was even worse than usual, for it was a fairy sob and these tears, while the tiniest in size, came from the reddest little eyes and the heaviest little heart in all the world. Marco knew instantly that it was a fairy sob. He sat bolt upright and listened carefully to see if he had been dreaming.

No—there it was again.

Up he jumped, and taking his cap and knotting his kerchief about his neck in true gypsy fashion, he peered through the tent door to see what was the matter.

There, in a tiny fluffy heap before his door, lay

the most crumpled bit of femininity it had ever been his lot to see.

A beautiful sprite she was, and crying as if her heart would break. She had thrown herself face downward on the ground, the spangles on her flower dress were soiled and dim—her whole attitude the picture of woe. Marco recognized her at once as the beautiful Fairy Echo whose wonderful talent of mimicry made her a charming and celebrated sprite throughout Fairyland. What could have happened to cause the Fairy Echo any pain?

She did not see the elf at all, but lay there beating her sparkling little toes on the ground and weeping the most minute tears possible.

Marco was too gallant a gentleman to intrude on a lady's grief under ordinary circumstances, but when the lady throws herself, weeping, on your very door step, she throws herself of necessity on your mercy as well. The elf, casting aside his cap, bent over her and gently assisted her to her bits of feet. He inquired as politely as he could the cause of her distress. With much grief and more indignation she stamped her little foot on the ground and gasped out her trouble.

It seemed that in her character of "Echo" she had gotten into an argument with some katydids. Of course the katydids could not see her, for fairies are rarely visible unless they choose to be, but they held that some fairy was responsible for the trouble. Each night when they sang their song about Katy and insisted that "Katy did," Echo in a spirit of mischief went off in the distance and, throwing her voice and imitating their tone exactly, argued back that "Katy didn't."

This had been going on for a number of years, and now the katydids had come out and insisted that some fairy was responsible, because there was no such insect as a "katydidn't." The insects were about to declare war, and the Fairy Queen had decreed that if the culprit were found, he or she should be banished from Fairyland; hence the dilemma of the little lady.

It was all true. She was guilty because she had tried to make the insects believe a falsehood just for her own amusement.

Marco pondered.

Certainly he must cure the trouble, for Fairyland would not be Fairyland without the beautiful Echo.

Then came a happy thought. Ah, yes! He could fix it. He would come to her rescue. So he patted her little hand and suggested that she hide in his tent all day and on no account to allow anyone to enter. Should elf, fairy or insect pass that way she was to imitate his own voice and say that he was not to be disturbed on any account.

Echo promised faithfully to carry out his instructions, and Marco spread his wings, waved farewell and flew away.

Echo pinned together the flaps of the tent, after carefully hanging Marco's cap on the outside to pretend that he was there. She then stretched her tired little body on the violet petals, tossed the hair out of her eyes and went to sleep.

Now the evening before it had been Marco's good fortune to find an empty locust shell. During Echo's recital of woe it had come to his ingenious elfin brain that he might take the shell

and manufacture an insect that would answer their purpose. He started at once for the spot, and sure enough there lay the shell near the root of a tree, dry and empty. The insects are very shrewd, and after looking the shell over, it was conclusively proven to Marco that he could not build up an empty shell to look like a living thing and thus deceive them. This difficulty, too, he finally dissolved, and how do you think he did it?

The Queen of the Fairies had called a meeting on the next night by the light of the bright new moon. The insects were courteously requested to be present in a body, that terms of peace might be proposed to them and agreed on, if possible. With this arrangement all parties were satisfied, and the Queen promised if the guilty fairy were found his banishment from her realm would immediately follow, and the katydids might go their way afterwards unmolested.

The eventful night arrived.

Many elves from the adjoining kingdom of Elfland were present, and practically all the fairies except the Fairy Echo. No one had seen her, nor could anyone explain her absence. Many of the wise ones shook their little heads ominously and suggested to each other that it was a bad night for anyone to be away.

There was to be some fun and frolic before the more serious affair was taken up. The gypsy-elf, Marco, from Elfland, was always on hand to tell their fortunes, or to dance and sing for them. Often he performed acrobatic feats in mid air for their amusement, and sometimes impersonated the well known fairies. As chief entertainer he had no rival.

As the night advanced and most of the frolicking was over, there began to be requests for their favorite to put in his appearance. The insects had all arrived in their best clothes, but with black faces and impressive dignity. Evidently their anger was not yet appeased. The katydids, particularly, maintained an aggrieved silence. The Fairy Queen on her flower stamen throne, which was gilded with powdered star dust and erected on a green moss dais, looked worried and anxious. Her usually serene little face was white, and the faces of the court fairies who surrounded her reflected the expression of her own.

Evidently Fairyland did not relish a war with the United Insect States, whose weapons of bites and stings were always ready for immediate use.

The amusements now being over, Marco still not having put in an appearance, and no word having come from the Fairy Echo, the meeting was called to order and the serious business of the occasion stated.

The katydids put forth their grievance and President Beetle of the Insects was seated in state by the side of the Fairy Queen, only on a slightly lower throne. In severe tones he demanded the production of the culprit and his consequent banishment, or war would be immediately declared against the unfortunate sprites.

At this the Grasshopper Guards straightened up and looked very fierce and imposing.

The president positively announced that, as President of the United Insect States, he knew of no such creature, winged or alive, as a "katydidn't." He was forced to the conclusion that

some fairy was guilty of an unseemly practical joke at the expense of his esteemed katydids.

Just as the Queen was about to make reply, there came a sudden whirr over their heads and down into their midst fluttered the Fairy Echo, rumpled and disheveled. Evidently she had had a long and tiresome flight, for her gauzy wings were drooping and the glitter gone from her fluffy skirts. She sank on her knees before the astonished Queen and preserved an attitude of supplication but of determination to be heard.

The Queen, too surprised to comment on the battered appearance of the usually immaculate Echo, gave commandment for her to state her business hurriedly, as matters of more serious moment were at that time holding the attention of all.

"I come, O Queen," said the artful sprite, "to show the results of many a day's anxious flight, and after a long and difficult search to protect our land from the insect invasion that threatens it." Here she threw an angry glance at the beetle and his followers. "If President Beetle does not become better acquainted with the citizens of his land, he may make future serious mistakes of this kind. I propose, Your Majesty, to produce before this assembled company the cause of all our trouble. I, too, have heard the katydidn't nightly reply to his kinsmen, the katydids, who it seems, refuse to recognize him. With your gracious permission the katydidn't will appear at my call. If the katydids still refuse him recognition, perhaps the locusts will be more kind, for he appears to be a distant connection of their own, to whom he bears a strong family resem-

blance. I await Your Majesty's pleasure." Echo lapsed into silence and again prostrated herself before the throne.

At this there was a great commotion, the katydids and locusts fluttering excitedly together and the fairy ladies exchanging astonished but curious remarks behind their moth-wing fans. The wee gentlemen of the court tried to look as if they had known it all the time.

The Queen gave the commandment at once, and the fairies and insects resumed their places and tried not to buzz or hum too loud.

Echo craved the Queen's gracious permission to retire as soon as she had produced the troublous katydidn't, as her long flight had so exhausted her that she was unable to present a proper appearance in the matter of court costume. This, too, the Queen granted immediately, being impatient to see the insect that even the others of his own kin failed to recognize.

Echo lifted her tired wings once more and floated slowly upward, making an airily, graceful gesture with her tiny hands as she went.

Straightway there rapidly descended, passing Echo in its flight, the most remarkable looking insect that fairy had ever seen. It came with a terrible buzz and flutter, its whole appearance betokening anger at the attitude of the others of its kind. Its body resembled the locust, but was of a peculiar green color, with a shifting golden light that played rapidly over its length. The light came and went, and the green of its body seemed incased in a glass reflector.

Out of the top of its head grew two horn-like pincers resembling those of the President him-

self, and it was possessed of at least ten legs, four of which were larger than all the rest. Its eyes bulged from its face in a peculiarly startling way. They were of a bright red color, and as the queer light ran forward and backward they glinted and blazed in a threatening manner.

The creature fluttered over the heads of the horrified katydids, blowing fierce breaths.

Strange to say its wings were gauzy, beautiful wings, not in the least resembling those of a katydid. As these wings were waved up and down with the agitated movement of the insect the light was reflected in myriad colors from their surface.

Over the locusts' heads the newcomer fluttered, scattering a rain of pollen in the lifted eyes of all who watched its flight.

President Beetle's dignity was much disturbed by being familiarly tweaked on the pincers by one of the creature's feet.

The Fairy Queen was left undisturbed except for a beautiful star spark that was dropped just in the center of her crown, where it blazed becomingly over her forehead. Evidently the strange visitor bore her no ill will, but reserved its revenge for those of its own kind.

After continuing its threatening flight, brushing the dainty coiffures of the court fairies, throwing gusts of pollen everywhere, and carrying with it a horrible odor of pennyroyal, the creature finally fell at the foot of the throne, quivering with rage and excitement. The whole assembly was frightened to the verge of hysterics. The faces of the other insects turned a sickly gray

color, which was as near as they could come to turning white with fear.

"Your name, stranger?" queried the agitated little sovereign, in a voice that quavered in spite of her apparent effort at self-control.

Here the katydids in their excitement came in with their usual cry, "Katydid! Katydid!"

Then a voice exactly of the tone and quality of the katydids, and which seemed to proceed from the creature's own throat, chattered "Katy-didn't—Katy-didn't."

Then a queer thing happened.

Some one laughed.

It was a humorous chuckle, but just why anyone should have been amused at this time it was impossible to tell.

The Queen and the President straightened up and listened intently. Deciding that they had been mistaken, the Queen arose from her seat on the throne. Turning to the President with dignity and not waiting for further explanations from the katy-didn't, perhaps guessing in her fairy shrewdness that they might not be satisfactory to all parties concerned, she said: "Evidently, President Beetle, you and the katydids have been guilty of a grievous mistake. There stands the explanation of your trouble. Ladies and gentlemen of the court, and among our guests, the Insects, there will be no war. In token of peace"—and she extended her tiny hand.

President Beetle immediately dropped on his presidential knee and kissed the hand before them all, not appearing to notice the nervous movement of the little Queen when his pincers came too near. At this there was much applause,

humming and buzzing, and much fluttering of wings. In the bustle the katy-didn't lifted its wings preparatory to flight, when the little Queen caught its wing in passing and murmured in a cautious tone: "We thank you, Marco, but your laugh came near being your undoing."

The katy-didn't, too, kissed the little hand, and as the meeting broke up he made a hurried flight to the broad leaf of the big tree over their heads. Here the naughty elf was greeted by a rejuvenated Echo. After divesting himself of the locust shell, the beetle pincers, the damp phosphorus-covered grass blade, the wild-berry eyes—he and that little lady proceeded to dance a merry measure on the broad leaf floor.

As they danced they laughingly sang to the time of their pattering feet: "If not a Katy-didn't, at least a big Hum-Bug."



The spider quickly bound Echo in the web, dainty wings and all being pitifully entangled.

THE CAPTIVE FAY

THE Fairy Echo had disappeared! The alarming tidings spread abroad through Fairyland with marvelous rapidity, followed by a feeling of sorrow and distress almost unknown in the happy land. Word had gone forth at last night's revel that she could not be found.

Then it was that the fairies recalled the fact that Echo had quarreled with a few of the insects some time before. The ominous whisper began to be circulated that she might have been captured and held prisoner by some of her late enemies.

The Queen was much disturbed at the bad news, and when day followed day and each night's moonlit dance still brought no word from her, her sovereign saw no recourse but to offer a reward for her safe return.

A proclamation was read before all of the fairies and elves which read like this:

"Whereas, our beautiful and esteemed Fairy Echo has been missing from her home for some weeks past; and whereas, no word has come from her as to her present whereabouts, an uneasiness about her safety and welfare so distresses Her Majesty, the Queen of Fairyland, that she offers a reward of the handsomest wing tips in the kingdom to the fairy so fortunate as to bring Her

Majesty certain word of the health and safety of the Fairy Echo."

It happened, the proclamation having been read both in Fairyland and Elfland, that the word of the strange disappearance finally reached Marco, the gypsy-elf.

He, like the rest, immediately laid the blame on the enmity of the insects. Girding on his bee-sting sword and taking up his water gun, he lifted fleet wings and floated away to her rescue. Not having the faintest clue as to where she was last seen and no suspicion as to the direction to take, he decided to stop at each habitation he passed to inquire for tidings about the missing fairy. While journeying along he lifted his voice in queer elfin calls or sang the songs of the gypsies, knowing that were Echo in hearing distance, she would respond by echoing his tones.

The first stopping place proved to be the residence of Mrs. Tree Toad. Mrs. Toad was at home, but was so exactly the color of her moss carpet that Marco came near overlooking her.

The home was a deep hollow in the root of a tree. The floor was carpeted with gray-green moss, and in its center stood a toadstool table with fringed edges. The table was littered with piles of feathers, bits of leaves, moss, cobwebs and wild flowers. Mrs. Toad was busily engaged in trimming her new hat—"had no time," she said, "to give to troublesome elves."

Marco took her ill humor with gay good nature, seated himself on a violet leaf and swinging gently up and down, explained the emergency. She still refused to listen until the elf, in payment

for her attention, promised to trim her hat himself, should she agree to aid him in the search.

Obtaining her promise, Marco flew with the hat to the top of the tree. Mrs. Toad followed, but her progress was necessarily slower, she having no wings and being afflicted with gout. When she reached the top she was delighted to see that the hat was completed, and was much the handsomest that any tree toad had worn that season.

Marco had caught a feather from a blue jay's wing in passing and fastened it to the crown of the hat with a long thorn pin. The hat was made of a red autumn leaf and floating from its brim was a cobweb veil colored red with the juice of wild berries, to match the hat. The hat pleased the toad, and she started down the tree once more to aid in the search, and promised to keep singing her rain song that Echo might answer should she come near.

Away went the tired elf once more until a threatened shower, prophesied by the tree frog, made him look downward for a shelter. An old fashioned flower garden lay just below, and Marco, descending rapidly, succeeded in plucking a nasturtium leaf to use as an umbrella just as the storm broke. He found refuge in the swaying cup of a hollyhock and, holding his umbrella before the opening, sat down on the pistil until the rain should pass. While seated there, two honey bees took shelter in the blossom next his own and, although they spoke in subdued tones, his alert ears caught the following conversation:

"They have her at last," buzzed the first bee softly.

"You don't mean it!" cried the other. "All the same I think they should let bygones be bygones. Then, why should Mrs. Spider take up another's grievance?"

"I do not know, I'm sure," said the first, "and I, for one, have no wish to prolong this unpleasantness with the fairies. They make good patrons when I desire to sell honey or to buy nectar; also if I wish an engagement to play at an entertainment, they are the first to answer my call."

Marco waited to hear no more, but dropping the nasturtium leaf, he climbed down the stalk of the hollyhock. Once on the ground, he cut a long, strong blade of grass and, making a slip noose, he climbed the stalk again. Throwing the noose skillfully over the blossom in which the bees were gossiping, he drew it tight, imprisoning the little brown occupants and immediately throwing them into a panic.

Marco tied the knot tightly, and seating himself astride the stem of the blossom he explained to them the reason of their imprisonment. If they did not immediately tell him whether or not the captive of whom they were speaking was the Fairy Echo and, this being the case, if they did not reveal both the name of her captor and place of imprisonment, he would keep them confined indefinitely, besides depriving them of their stings.

This frightened the bees very much and they hastened to confess that they were speaking of the Fairy Echo, but knew nothing positive about her capture. They had been merely repeating what had been told them by a butterfly, lately out of her chrysalis. If the elf would kindly liberate them, they promised faithfully to do all in

their power to assist in his search. On their agreement to lead him to the home of this newborn butterfly, Marco slipped the grass blade noose from their blossom and set the frightened honey makers free. Off they went flying side by side, close together, Marco standing with one foot on the back of each bee.

Soon they arrived over the bed of a beautiful stream of water. It was covered by water lilies of great size. In the heart of the largest lily dwelt the butterfly. Here the bees left Marco, still assuring him of their loyalty to the fairies and the elves.

On interviewing the butterfly Marco found that she had come by her information while still in the chrysalis. She was almost ready to burst the shell, when she heard the voices of some spiders talking about an important capture they had made. At first, they said, they thought it was a fly, but on investigation they discovered who it was and decided to hold her for ransom.

As to whether or not their captive was the Fairy Echo the butterfly did not know, but had strongly suspected it. All she could do to assist the elf would be to lead him to the spot at which she emerged from the chrysalis, and he would have to do the rest. What would he give her in payment for this assistance on her part?

The elf had hard work to think of a prize great enough, but the butterfly finally consented if he would promise to assist her at any time of need. Marco agreed, and as they started away together, he took careful note of her appearance and attire.

They traveled quite a distance until they reached an apple orchard. The orchard was fairly

festooned with cobwebs of great length and variety. Large wheels swung between the trees, and ropes and garlands of the web, some gray, some black, some white, hung everywhere. These fantastic web shapes were covered with drops of dew which reflected the moonlight in myriad hues. At the end of a twisted rope of black web that connected two of the largest trees, they came upon the butterfly's empty chrysalis swinging in the breeze.

Then the butterfly left the elf, being too nervous at the proximity of so many powerful spiders and strong webs.

The spiders all seemed to be engaged with household duties; very few of them being visible, and these so busy spinning their webs as not to notice the gypsy-elf. Each web was equipped with a long circular apartment like a cave. Here they kept their larders, which were usually filled with the bodies, alive and dead, of less powerful insects on which they fed. Each web also had a lookout.

Now a lookout was a spider placed in charge of the web to watch for unwary flies and throw the catch web just in time.

Marco discovered some dried sap on the trunk of the apple tree. Divesting himself of his doublet and cap, he hung them on an apple stem and proceeded to cover his little body with the sticky sap. Then leaving the tree, he dropped on the petal of a tall sunflower and rolled over and over in the yellow pollen. About his head he bound his mottled kerchief, and then dusted flecks of pollen over his changeable elfin wings.

What should he do now but go back to the

spider web, fold his wings and, lying down in the chrysalis, wrapped it closely about his body and awaited developments.

On this particular web Mrs. Spider acted as her own lookout, but as to-day was preserving day, she was engaged most of the time in her inner room. Every now and then she came to the door and looked the web over in search of prey.

Marco had not long to wait. The old spider moved cautiously to the door and glanced around, tying on her apron, which was made of a leaf of poison weed. Then with a muttered exclamation she waddled rapidly across the intervening part of the web toward the butterfly's cradle. As she came she took out a large pair of eyeglasses and put them on, the better to look it over.

Marco lay very still, now and then causing the chrysalis to quiver all over with his smothered laughter.

"Did anyone ever hear of such a thing?" grumbled the old spider. "It has not been more than two days since I caught that shell in my web and failed to fasten it tightly, only reaching it in time to see the butterfly escape me. Now, here's another one in the same shell! Twins! Well!" The nearer she came, the more the chrysalis shook, and just as she reached it and prepared to throw more of her cruel ropes about it—pop!! The shell burst open before her eyes and the new butterfly sprang out.

The old spider fell backward with a startled "Oh-o-!" which caused the eyeglasses to fall off.

Immediately this extraordinary butterfly jerked his water-filled gun from his pocket and shot her eyes full of water. Growling and threat-

ening, Mrs. Spider rolled over, while Marco made a dash for the door of the cave. In his hand he carried his sword, with which he cut apart the webs in his path. Inside the cave was a long, dark hall. Down this hall sped the gypsy-elf, crying: "Echo! Echo!" as he ran.

Clear as a bell from the lower end of the hall came back the echo in very truth. This room, too, would have been dark had it not been filled with captive fireflies. The cobweb across this door was much too strong for the bee sting sword to cut apart.

Marco called to the fairy prisoner to assist, and they rapidly tore it apart with their hands. By this time Mrs. Spider had succeeded in getting the water out of her eyes and was coming down the hall. She had closed the entrance door with thick cobweb and was spinning all down the hall as she came.

Echo was explaining the details of her capture to Marco as they worked, talking and pulling at the cruel web as fast as she could. It seems that the spider had not known of Echo's trouble with the katydids at all, but one day while pursuing her vocation as an echo the venturesome fairy had flown too near and been caught in the spider's web. Being night at the time, the spider had heard the fall, but not being able to see, supposed her to be a fly or other insect. She quickly bound Echo in the web, dainty wings and all being pitifully entangled. Here the pretty fairy spent a wretched night, echoing the calls of all the insects, yet not being able to attract their attention enough to show her peril.

The next morning Mrs. Spider, noting the im-

portant capture she had made, with an eye to business, had decided to hold her for ransom. President Beetle of the United Insect States never prosecuted the spiders for plying their vocation. They were duly licensed to catch enough unwary insects to keep their larder filled the year round. It was of no use to ask help from him, for Echo would merely be regarded by his uncivilized mind as a trophy of the chase, or perhaps a prisoner of war.

Mrs. Spider, known to have weak eyes, was behind Marco in the dark hall during Echo's story. The gypsy-elf whispered to the fireflies that they would make a dash for freedom through a side door that was scarcely more than a tiny hole, while the fireflies must roll in a ball together and turn on their lights all at once. This would so dazzle the spider's eyes that she could not see to follow.

As soon as Echo and Marco reached the outer air the gypsy-elf would turn the stream from his water gun full on the spider until the fireflies could follow, and all be at liberty.

Having cut enough of the web from across the door for Marco to lift the fairy through, they followed the above plan in detail.

My! what a time they had.

What growling and sputtering went on while the water poured in the spider's face, and the passing insects beat her with their wings.

The fireflies released, Marco and Echo walked down the remaining web, tight-rope fashion, until they reached the ground. Here the little Echo was so weak and faint from her long imprisonment and narrow escape that she could go no

farther. She fell on the ground, her little wings fluttering helplessly.

Marco immediately dispatched one firefly after his coat and cap from the apple stem, and several of the others to bring a large acorn cup. This done, he lifted his companion into the acorn cup, wrapping her in his own little coat, and raised the cup in his arms. Up he flew, appearing for all the world like a tiny living aeroplane. The grateful fireflies formed a glowing body guard about the acorn cup basket, two of the largest attaching themselves to the rim in front to act as search-lights. Rapidly they covered the distance to Fairyland, and what a welcome they received! Such rejoicing! Such a lovely ceremony when the brown gypsy-elf was presented with the handsomest wing tips in Fairyland.

The tips were made of crystallized bits of moonbeams, and were fastened like jewels to each of his fleet elfin wings.

Then, too, what a graceful speech he made, assuring the fairies that the best part of all was not the reward, but the happy restoration to home and safety of the favorite fairy of the realm. He felt certain that this assertion found an "Echo" in every heart.

THE QUEEN'S CARNIVAL

CARNIVAL time had come. Each year in the golden autumn, when the time for the moonlit dances was almost gone, Queen Florita of Fairyland and the King of Elfland combined forces and gave a carnival celebrating the departure of summer.

Great revelry prevailed for two glorious nights, and afterward the frivolous sprites settled down to definite preparation for the winter's cold.

The first night was the great ball of the season when the frolicsome little people danced the whole night through. The second, was the night of nights, for it was an occasion of music and surprises. Each fairy and elf who was gifted with keen imagination prepared a surprise for the others. The one whose idea was the most unique received the appointment of Court Fairy, which was only second in importance to the sovereigns themselves. It was regarded as a position of great power and distinction.

The spot selected for the Carnival celebration this year was a bit of mossy ground on the brink of a clear forest stream. Pebbles from the bank of the stream were joined together by insect sculptors who were often rudely mentioned as "dirt-daubers." The clay-joined pebbles were used for building a wall about the moss-covered enclosure. The Carnival ground, being directly

beneath a great tree, was in deep shadow. There was but little chance for moonbeams to filter through, therefore it became necessary to provide artificial lights to brighten the gala occasion. Forked twigs were placed on the surface of the wall at intervals of two inches. A glow worm was coiled about each twig, and on the prongs of its fork were fireflies inclosed in red rose petals. A turtle was engaged for the occasion, whose business it was to lie still in the center of the Carnival ground, with head, feet and tail drawn under its shell. The shell was then encircled by fireflies which were wrapped in flower petals similar to those on the wall. In this way was fashioned a stage with gaudy footlights, to be used for the surprise exhibitions. The root of a tree was covered with a carpet of red and yellow autumn leaves. On the dais thus formed were erected two thrones of spun glass, with cushions of thistledown. Over the thrones was a canopy made of one scarlet sweet gum leaf, fringed with feathery golden rod. Between the twig candelabra around the wall were placed snow white shells with delicate pink hearts. Out of each shell grew a tiny wild violet, each bearing one perfect blossom. Just inside the walls were birch bark seats for the audience. The seats were arranged in tiers and the aisles were carpeted with moss. Outside the pebble wall was another wall of damp, phosphorescent wood, to add brilliancy to the scene. Refreshment booths, hung with cobweb streamers and pennants dyed in the crimson juice of wild berries, were erected on each side the entrance gates. Here, acorn salad and nectar frappe were served from nasturtium bowls. The

booths were presided over by winsome elves in autumn array.

The crowd was not long in gathering.

The visitors from Elfland arrived in birch bark airships with maple leaf sails. Their King followed in a private aeroplane. This aeroplane was a walnut shell supported on the back of a patient dragon fly. The little monarch was gorgeous in his Carnival costume. His elfin green doublet and hose were ornamented with jeweled braid, and from his kingly shoulders fell a mantle of purple iron weed. He wore his crystal crown somewhat rakishly on one side, while his long, black hair floated about his neck.

As soon as the elves were seated, the fairies fluttered through the gates in a variegated shower, their flower clothes in brilliant contrast to the soberer ones of their woodland neighbors.

A cricket trumpeter announced the arrival of Queen Florita.

Two flower attired pages dashed down the center aisle, scattering miniature rose buds, after which came the ladies and gentlemen of the court. Then entered the maid-of-honor, beautiful Bright-eyes, who was the Queen's especial attendant; afterward Florita herself. She was attired in a lily petal gown with court train. On her head, in lieu of her usual crown, she wore a valley lily cap and snowy cobweb motor veil. She carried a wand which was also a scepter, the star spark on the end sparkling as she moved. Two pages bore her train, and behind her at a respectful distance marched the Bee Brothers' Band.

The Queen took her seat on the throne amid much applause. After due deference was made

her by King Sylvas, who occupied the other throne, she gave the signal for the frolic to begin.

The trumpeter again stepped forward, gave two clarion calls, and through the entrance gates hopped a huge toad. His head was garlanded with a wreath of clover and in his mouth he bore a mussel shell. Down the aisle he hopped until he reached the turtle stage, when with the highest hop of all he landed in its center. Then straightway he dropped the mussel shell, the drum beat a loud tattoo, and lo! the shell opened. The band played a lively air, and out on the stage from the open shell sprang two elfin dancers. Brown as berries they were, a wee man and a wee-er lady, clothed in scarlet and powdered with pollen that floated about them in a golden cloud as they danced. Fast and faster went the nimble folk, their black eyes danced more rapidly than the twinkling feet, and their cheeks glowed warmer than their dress.

The dance over, up they fluttered to the back of the frog, and away he hopped off the turtle stage and over the wall.

Two black imp supers hurried forward and removed the empty mussel shell, and the next act was on.

This proved to be a remarkable fencing match between two members of the Grasshopper Guards, the match refereed by a courtier from Florita's court.

Next came a stately minuet, danced by elfin gentlemen with powdered locks, and fairy ladies in long dresses with court trains. A Cricket Choir trained by beautiful Brighteyes and clothed in vestments, came after the minuet. They wore

expressions of deep solemnity as they filed on the stage, and their voices showed careful training and natural sweetness.

Brighteyes also wore vestments during this act, and a tasseled college cap on her head.

She held a pine needle baton and directed the chorus with unusual ability while the audience applauded lustily.

Just at this time a colony of bullfrogs in the neighboring stream boomed out a deafening bass and would not be silenced, so anxious were they to join in the music. King Sylvas, himself, was forced to ride out over the stream in his aeroplane and direct the imp supers to drop a hazelnut into the mouth of each frog, to stop the noise. This done, the frogs could only rumble faintly, and on the return of the King, the entertainment proceeded.

An elfin insect trainer appeared with seven trained spiders. The spiders were of the horrible variety with long fuzzy legs. Now this fuzz had been blondined with yellow pollen and the spiders were blindfolded. Each one wore a cape of purple pansy petals. The largest spider turned on its side and commenced to slowly revolve like a great wheel. As he revolved each of the other six jumped on one of his feet and turned about like smaller wheels in an opposite direction. This formed a wondrous sight, the yellow legs, black bodies and purple mantles whirling dizzily in the fireflies' glow.

The act over, a startling incident occurred. Every firefly and glow worm shut off his light, and no gleam was there save the soft shimmer of the phosphorous. Then the music became a

whisper, and up in the branches of the tree a mocking bird began to sing. A strange, sweet melody it was, and the elves and fairies hushed their merriment to listen.

King Sylvas caught Florita's hand in a sort of ecstasy, when down from the tree, exactly as if wafted on the song of the bird, fluttered a large, black butterfly. It had crimson spots on its wings and it was followed by four golden butterflies. Each of the golden butterflies bore glittering fireflies on its outstretched wings. The large, black butterfly took a position in mid air directly over the turtle shell. The four yellow butterflies then paused, one at the head, another at the feet, and the other two at each of the wings, of the black beauty. In this way a beautiful picture was made in the air, a picture of a brilliant cross made of butterflies and lighted by fireflies.

As the bird's song grew louder and more ripplingly sweet a shower of tiny rose and white moths appeared, bearing baby fireflies between their wings, and these formed a jeweled chain festooning the cross. The cross and chain were never still, the butterflies of the cross keeping up the shimmering quiver peculiar to their kind; and the moths flying rapidly one behind another around and around the cross. Next a circle of blue butterflies flecked with star dust descended in a sparkling mass and circled slowly in undulations between the links of the chain. Then more butterflies of gold, and purple, and brown, followed in quick succession.

With each new shower the audience broke forth in prolonged applause, and one of the bull-

frogs suddenly swallowed his hazelnut and could only croak his approval in a loud, discordant note that almost spoiled the enchanting picture.

The butterfly pageant went on, the lights of all the glow worms and fireflies were flashed forth, and the harvest moon burst through a fissure in the leaves in one brilliant, silver beam that shone like a halo directly on the cross.

Immediately there went up a shout: "The Court Fairy! the Court Fairy!"

"Who trained the butterflies?"

"Whose thought was it?"

"He'll be Court Fairy."

"Where is he?"

"Who is he?"

In answer to the cries the mocking bird songster up in the tree spread its wings and descended to the turtle shell. On the bird's tail stood a black imp, spraying perfumed nectar from a honeysuckle atomizer over the audience. On the bird's back stood—what do you think?

There between its outspread wings was a tiger lily tent with a tassel of goldenrod on its top. Inside the tent, beating a tambourine with gay abandon, his saucy head on one side—was seated Marco, the gypsy-elf, smiling at the success of his scheme. He stepped from the tent and sprang on the head of the turtle, for the poor tired creature had jerked his head out of his shell to see the cause of the tumult. The elf put his hand on his heart and, facing the King and Queen, dropped on one knee. At this, all the

butterflies swooped down around him in a rainbow cloud, and the mocking bird burst into song.
The Carnival was over.

A GHOST STORY

MARCO, the gypsy-elf, having grown tired of the monotony of a long, solitary evening in his tent, went to the door to see what he could see. He had a great head for mischief, and whenever he was in the mood that he was to-day, something was liable to happen. More than likely it would be something that ought not to happen and that the elf would find himself sorry for afterward. As he stood between the petal curtains of his Easter lily tent, whom should he spy, springing daintily from one nodding grass blade to another, but the Fairy Echo. She looked particularly winsome to-day, with a violet cap surrounding her rosy little face. Her dress was made of white violet petals, caught about her waist with a lily stamen cord. When she caught sight of the bored elf standing at his door she waved a friendly hand in greeting. Then she lifted airy wings, floated upward and three times around the tent, just escaping Marco's eager arms stretched out to catch her. With a merry laugh she dropped upon the roof of the tent and, seating herself amid a flutter of skirts, proceeded to coast swiftly down the side.

Marco caught her just as she reached the ground.

"What shall we do?" she asked, spinning

about on her toes and fanning herself with her wings.

"Well," said the elf, "yonder lies a cockle burr, and there are many possibilities for both fun and trouble in a cockle burr."

"Then fun first," said the fairy. "I'll race you to it, and see which can stand on its prickles longest without flinching."

Away they went and, alighting on the burr, proceeded to dance a merry jig step on its prickles, for neither could stand still a moment without changing position.

While frolicking in this manner they saw in the distance, flying along swiftly and as if bent on mischief, the Bad Fairy.

Now the Bad Fairy was so very bad, indeed, that he was always making trouble for some one, yet never seemed to have any himself.

The happy thought struck the gypsy-elf that it would be quite a feather in the cap of either Echo or himself to give the Bad Fairy some troubles of his own. He had needed punishment for his wicked deeds for a long while, and Marco decided to do this, in his own way.

The Bad Fairy had not discovered the two cockle burr dancers, and no sooner had the thought come to Marco than he dragged Echo off the burr and whispered in her ear:

"That was the fun of the burr, and now for the trouble," and he confided to her the rest of his plan.

They plucked a large, soft leaf from a neighboring bush, and spread it in inviting folds over the top of the prickly burr. Then they dropped

flat on the ground, and wriggled their little bodies well out of sight behind the deceptive couch.

Along came the unsuspecting Bad Fairy, flying straight toward them. In his hand he carried a cruel thorn, with which he prodded and cut every harmless insect that he passed. He cut off the heads of some, and the legs and wings of others, leaving them to suffer and die alone. He seemed to be very tired, for he had flown very rapidly; but on arriving at the pretty, green couch, it appeared so soft and inviting, that he folded his wings and allowed himself to drop upon it with great force.

The leaf immediately split in many places, permitting the sharp prickles to puncture the wicked fellow. He arose with a howl of rage and pain, only to perceive Marco rolling over on the ground in fits of laughter.

Of course the gypsy-elf would not have found this pleasure in another's pain, had the other not have been noted for many cruelties.

Echo remained hidden, but she laughed so much that the violet cap fell off and her golden hair tumbled in a radiant shower over her shoulders.

The Bad Fairy grasped the cruel thorn firmly and, advancing upon Marco, made a terrible lunge toward him.

The elf, seeing a chance at more fun, sprang backward, leading the other on. After much sword play the gypsy-elf fell on the ground with a loud groan.

The Bad Fairy, supposing he was dead, took one fearful look at him, lifted his wings in terror and flew hurriedly away. He realized that

if Marco were dead, both King Sylvas of Elfland and Queen Florita of the Fairies would never allow his murderer to escape. No sooner was the Bad Fairy out of sight than Echo ran from her hiding place and called out:

"Humbug, what is the idea this time?"

The naughty elf rose from the ground unhurt, and with a merry laugh shook his black hair out of his eyes and adjusted the gypsy kerchief about his neck.

"My dear, you ought to be crying over my mishap, instead of speaking disrespectfully of the dead," he said reprovingly.

Echo refused to be satisfied. "No—no—but what is your scheme? Why did you pretend to be killed? What are you going to do now? Tell me."

On seeing that she meant to hear the plan, Marco explained:

"He is a wicked fairy. He frightens and hurts elves and fairies who have done him no wrong. I shall pretend to be dead, and haunt him. He shall confess his crimes and be sorry for them. Wait and see." Marco sat down on the ground and hugged his knees, his eyes twinkling.

This was an idea indeed!

The two put their naughty heads together until the whole plot was arranged.

King Sylvas was giving a ball that evening in honor of the Fairy Queen. What better time to haunt the Bad Fairy than when he was in evening clothes and on his way to the grand affair?

That night the palace of Elfland, made entirely of transparent rose-pink sea shells, was ablaze with lights. It was festooned inside and

out with long streamers of soft green moss starred with pink rose petals to match the walls. Black imp servants hurried to and fro, serving the guests, who included the entire fairy band and all the elves of note.

King Sylvas was determined that no fairy should be left out, and thereby cause Queen Florita any distress.

Elfland's King was becoming much smitten with the little ruler of the neighboring kingdom, and this ball was to be an especial effort.

When most of the guests had assembled and the dancing was in full swing, the Bad Fairy entered, all dressed in red rose petals, for all the world like a fairy Mephisto. He swaggered all around the ball room with quite an air, dancing with all the prettiest elves. The fairies refused to dance with him because he was the Bad Fairy, until he came to the Fairy Echo.

Now, Marco had cautioned her to persuade the Bad Fairy to sit out the dance with her, should he ask her to dance.

Already many had asked for Marco, and King Sylvas was much annoyed that the gypsy-elf should show a disregard for his wishes, by failing to put in an appearance.

Every time Marco's name was mentioned the Bad Fairy, supposing that he had committed murder, trembled all over and turned a shade paler than before. At last so very white did he become that Echo's kind heart nearly failed her; but, true to her promise to the gypsy-elf, she led the Bad Fairy out into the quiet summer darkness. They seated themselves under a mushroom arbor with tasseled fringe reaching nearly

to the ground. The Bad Fairy was at outs with all the other fairies on account of his many misdeeds, and not a few wondered at Echo for being polite to a fairy guilty of so much wrong. Nevertheless they sat out in the arbor while the night grew darker and darker. Great, black clouds came up, and they could scarcely see each other except when a tiny gleam of light flashed from the palace through the fringe.

Suddenly a faint light appeared that passed like a streak of lightning around the arbor.

The Bad Fairy jumped and, catching Echo's little hand, stammered nervously:

"Wha-what was that?"

"What was what?" asked Echo innocently.

"Di-didn't you see anything?" gasped the wicked fellow; then recovering himself, he murmured: "Ah, yes; I see it was only the lightning, for I hear the thunder now."

Quietly they resumed their conversation, Echo loosening her hand from his cold one.

All at once in the darkest part of the arbor, quite close to where they were seated, the fringe of the mushroom parted. Marco's ghost stood before them!

The Bad Fairy knew it to be Marco's ghost at once and, with a groan of terror, fell on the ground at Echo's feet, clasping her knees and begging for mercy.

The ghost was quite white. The same trim little woodland suit that the gypsy-elf had worn during his lifetime clung to this eerie shape, but now it was pure white and surrounded by a faint, ethereal radiance like a halo. His hair, formerly black, was like driven snow, and blowing back

from his ashy face in wild disorder. The eyes were deep and sunken, and the wings reached to the ground in majestic dignity, like those of an angel. Marco was not particularly well versed in ghost language, but he consoled himself with the reflection that on this score his victim was no wiser than himself. He felt sure that some sound must be made just at this moment to make the fright perfect, and the reformation of the wicked fairy complete. He had brought along a bit of cotton string covered with resin, which he now proceeded to draw through his hands, emitting a despairing shriek. Then, to add to the horror, over on the ground tumbled Marco, in exactly the way he had fallen when the Bad Fairy supposed he was dying. As he fell, the elf gave the same cry, and the resin shrieked, but it was as nothing to the shriek given by the goaded fairy.

Echo shook herself free from his frantic grasp, and as the guests rushed from the palace in crowds to learn the cause of such cries the storm broke in all its fury. The Fairy Echo slipped unnoticed through the company, and grasped the hand of the ghost, who immediately disguised his own white radiance as well as the little lady under a dark cloak. They vanished in the darkness, just in the nick of time. The last thing they saw, as they crept away, was the frightened fairy on his knees before Reverend Mr. Jack of Jack-in-the-Pulpit fame, confessing all his crimes, including the murder of Marco, the gypsy-elf.

Of course this caused the wildest excitement and grief, for Marco was much beloved. Bitter

were the threats uttered by both elf and fairy against his murderer, for all believed the confession true.

Even the wicked one, himself, considered that in this one rare instance he had spoken truth.

After a time the excitement subsided, and the tardy appearance of the gypsy-elf at the ball, in the flesh, allayed the fears as to his death.

The ghost remained a mystery to all except the Rev. Mr. Jack. He had a quiet laugh to himself when Marco boasted that he had accomplished more toward reforming the Bad Fairy by a little pollen and damp phosphorous than the minister had with his excellent sermons.

DOCTOR MARCO

ONE bright summer morning in an old fashioned garden of roses, as Marco floated idly from flower to flower, sipping nectar, he came upon a crowd of multicolored fairy folk attired in the smartest of new bathing suits. They were taking a morning dip in the gorgeous blossoms of a beautiful pink rose bush. Much amazed at the sight, the gypsy-elf hastened to join them. The garden was filled with beautiful flowers, each with a plentiful supply of dew—then why the necessity of the entire band bathing in the blooms of this especial bush?

On his arrival the fairies, looking rosy, fresh, and bright-eyed in their play, hailed him with delight. They called merry “good mornings” to him and offered him a bathing suit. Each fairy had a flower to himself.

A strange circumstance to Marco was that the rose bush, itself, looked very despondent. The fairies were the only ones who were having the fun.

The rose’s rich green foliage was drooping toward the ground and turning yellow.

While Marco was replying to the sallies of the bathers, his observant eye was gazing at the flower critically.

Drops of water trickled from it down on the ground. Every now and then a quiver passed

over the bush, as if it were in pain. Turning to the frolicsome folk, Marco asked: "Why did all of you choose the same rose bush? Are there not hundreds of blooming plants around, laden with freshest morning dew? Why did you choose this one particularly?"

"Oh," cried Brighteyes, merrily, "we have been coming here every morning for weeks. You see the dew on this flower is salt water."

"What!" cried the astounded elf. "What made it salt?"

Brighteyes dived quite to the bottom of the largest rose before answering, then reappeared with her curls in wet disorder. The striped-grass bathing suit clung to her lithe body.

"We did not try to solve the problem. It is too hot and, as mortals say, 'Come on in—the water's fine.'"

Away she splashed, shaking off both water and responsibility at the same time.

Not satisfied, the gypsy-elf drew slightly aloof from the crowd and continued to study the flower. Drop—drop—drop, went the water to the ground, and as quickly as they were emptied did the blossoms fill again. It was even as Marco had suspected. The water constantly dripping and disappearing was not dew. Whoever heard of dew replenishing itself? Something was troubling the pretty flower. The poor thing was weeping. The salt baths of the fairies were being supplied by the tears of a beautiful rose.

On discovering the true condition of affairs, Marco sought Queen Florita among the bathers. Yes, there she was, though you could scarcely recognize her, thus shed of her court dress, and

attired in a purple pansy bathing suit with her royal golden hair in curls and ripples about her shoulders.

Marco confided his suspicions to the pinkest little ear in Fairyland; but as this ear also belonged to the kindest little heart, the Queen called the fairy band about her and told the rose's story.

Immediately each one wished to find the cause of the trouble, and comfort the rose in her grief. Dispatching a messenger for King Sylvas and the elves to come to their assistance, the fairies took hands and circled the rose bush, chanting a weirdly pretty air expressing their contrition. They did this in repentance that all of their sport for several weeks should have come through the sorrow of another. With much excitement, and attended by a fluttering brown and green flock of elves, Sylvas arrived and was enlightened as to the message.

The gypsy-elf was spokesman, and he explained that some insect was at the rose's root, eating away its life. Evidently the flower was suffering, and he called attention to the ground beneath, soft and muddy from the continuous shower of tears. Of course if an insect were responsible they could expect no assistance from the other insects. They must wait until the darkest hour of the night to begin operations, without even asking the fireflies for light, or the Grasshopper Guards for assistance, in any battle that might occur.

While Marco was speaking, several very tiny ants passed by, nodding good-morning, but ap-

parently paying no attention to the fairy conclave under the rose.

Marco signaled significantly to Sylvas, who placed his hand on his sword, but at another warning gesture, thought better of it, and only stared in the direction the ants had taken.

At this interchange of signals all eyes turned in the same way.

What should they see but a tiny ant-hole just to one side of the rose bush! Even as they looked more ants passed them, going into the hole, until they formed a steady procession.

All the elves and fairies became very quiet.

The more ants that went into the hole, the faster fell the rose's tears, until the fairies were glad that they still wore their bathing suits, and the elves sought shelter under a neighboring shrub.

The last ants to appear were forced to swim to the hole. As they passed within, King Sylvas pushed forward and, motioning some of the elves to assist him, with his own hands placed a large pebble over the hole. This would shut them in for a while at least, but they would soon make their way out.

A plan must be adopted and the conference ended as soon as possible. They were now reasonably certain that the ants were causing the rose's ailment, and Marco was asked for a remedy.

"The rose," he replied impressively, "shall be healed," whereat they clapped their tiny hands and gave a cheer for "Doctor Marco."

The gypsy-elf directing, both the elves and fairies fell to work, digging about the rose's roots with large thorn spades.

Marco, assisted by the strongest elves, dug a large cave-like hole in the ground. After a long while they could tell by the voices of the ants that they had dug quite to the rose's roots.

He then persuaded a kind bird to bring them a bit of cane. The cane was full of knots and pith, but by constantly working until almost dark, they cleared it out and pushed the cane through their cave and into the ground. This was to form a passageway large enough for a fairy to crawl down to the roots and discover what part the ants were playing.

They procured several glow worms to light the way, both through the passage and down under ground, stationing a guard of fairies and elves with drawn thorns about the rose bush. Then, one by one, the elves coasted down the cane passage into the ground.

The glow worms were very sullen and unruly. Marco ordered a black imp to stand over each one with a bit of briar to prick him into line. The gypsy-elf more than half suspected the worms of siding with the insects, from having such constant association with the fireflies. After feeling the briars a few times, however, the sullen creatures thought better of it and shed their light at Marco's command.

Sylvas, as became a king who was the leader of his people, made the descent first. Marco followed, and then all of the elfin gentlemen, armed with thorns and carrying acorn cups filled with medicine. Four black imps went next, each pair carrying a very long thorn.

The fairy gentlemen were left above ground

to protect the ladies of both bands and to guard the ant-hole exit.

Any stray insect that fluttered near was to be instantly swallowed by the friendly bird who had brought the cane.

It was dark by this time, and the bird was asleep with his head under his wing. Florita seated herself on his back and awakened him with her sceptre every time an insect came near.

The ants, being in such numbers, would be as much as both bands of little people at once could handle.

Very soon the fairies above ground became aware that a fierce battle was taking place under ground. There were cries and screams, the sound of scuffling, and then a powerful odor of medicine. This medicine was originally intended to heal the wounds of the poor injured rose, but was also being used to heal those hurt in the fight.

Suddenly a little whirr overhead announced the arrival of a belated fairy.

It was Echo.

No sooner was she made acquainted with the cause of the trouble than she broke loose from the restraining hands of the gentlemen who tried to bar her way. Sitting flat down on the incline of the cane cave, she coasted straight down and landed in the very thick of the fray. She took out her wand, one of the most powerful in Fairyland, and waved it backward and forward, tumbling the wicked ants over on their backs, where the elves immediately dispatched them. In return, hundreds of their comrade ants went for her little feet, and, climbing all over her face and body, they stung her unmercifully from head to toe.

By this time, although the glow worm light was low, Sylvas and Marco suddenly perceived her. They made a dash for her side, swept the stinging ants away and ordered her back above ground. She merely laughed in their faces, and although her own little face was swelled to twice its natural size, she continued to fight, cheering the elves with her ringing voice. She trampled the ants with her tiny feet, and echoed her own cheers for the benefit of the listeners above.

The rose's tears suddenly ceased, and it drew such a sigh of relief that its roots were slightly lifted, causing a rather violent earthquake. It threatened to fill the cane passage with loose earth, and had the sigh continued, might have buried the venturesome elves alive. The rose settled quietly down again, and the battle ended in a great victory for the elves.

The imps went about impaling the dead ants on the long thorns.

The place where the battle had occurred was a large cleared space like a cavern to one side of the main roots. The ant-hole led directly to this cavern on one side, and the cane passage of the elves on the other. In the midst of it, and just beneath the bush was the ant hill.

The imps carried the dead ants above the ground. Many elves and fairies were cruelly stung, but none seriously injured. Marco poured the medicine about the rose's roots and, seeing the cause, understood the pain and salty tears. The elves had come none too soon, and if ever a flower smiled and resumed her color, this lovely one did.

King Sylvas and Marco next made a stretcher out of Marco's cape and Echo's skirt. Lifting the

still cheerful but much battered little Echo from the ant nest where she sat nursing her wounds, they placed her upon the stretcher.

Next the problem presented itself as to a way to carry her through the cane, when it did not admit of either elf standing upright. Marco settled this by sending Sylvas on ahead to conduct the army of fighters by the glow worm's light, back above ground. No one was left but Marco and the suffering fairy. This was exactly as Marco wished. He attached the end of the stretcher to his waist by means of Echo's long sash. He dropped on his hands and knees and crawled up the cane, dragging the stretcher behind, for all the world as if they were playing horse. Just before emerging into the light where the other elves were gathered, Marco paused. Turning back to the funny vehicle with its pretty passenger, the gypsy-elf horse left on the fattest of little swelled cheeks, "a kiss like the drip of a drop of dew."

CHRISTMAS IN FAIRYLAND

THE fairies had gone into winter quarters. Cold weather had arrived in earnest, and no flower-cup homes were left them, so they were cozily ensconced inside of tree roots or were boarding in the tree tops with Mrs. Flying Squirrel. Others becoming faint-hearted, had floated on gauzy wings to the warm countries. Enough remained, however, to make a goodly number for a genuine Christmas merrymaking. The beautiful Florita, Queen of the Fairies, and Brighteyes, chief Maid-of-Honor to Her Majesty, were the promoters of the scheme.

They had engaged from the adjoining Kingdom of Elfland as chief entertainer for the occasion, Marco, the gypsy-elf.

The fairies and elves invariably depended on Marco to originate some surprise to add zest to every occasion. As his brain was the brightest, his wings the fleetest and his heart the kindest in all the combined kingdoms, they chose wisely and well.

With his bee-sting sword at his waist, his long-pointed elfin shoes and a rose-petal kerchief knotted about his head in true gypsy fashion, he made a winsome picture.

Now every little brain was active, each tiny pair of hands busy, and all the gauzy wings untiring in eager preparation.

Such gayety had not been known in Fairyland in all their moonlit summer frolics heretofore.

Princess Brighteyes was talking of it to the Queen.

"And have you heard, Your Majesty," she said, "Marco tells me he has prepared the greatest surprise—something not one of us has ever seen before."

"That, my dear," said the Queen with dignity, "is precisely for what I engaged him."

Catching her feather boa closer about her tiny throat she hurried away to see if her orders concerning the assembly hall for Christmas night had been carried out.

Brighteyes followed the Queen to the hall, which had been fitted up in the interior of the hollow stump of a pine tree, sweet with the odor of resin and the suggestion of glowing Christmas fires. As the two fairies entered, active spiders and silk worms were festooning the walls with cobweb and silken ropes. Some of these ropes were strung with crimson berries, and some entwined with Christmas greenery.

It was Christmas Eve, and little time was left them.

Many black imps hurried to and fro at Marco's bidding. He, being master of ceremonies, stood in the center of the room, even the decorations coming under his critical eye.

A cheerful fire of small pine knots and cedar balls burned in a fireplace and roared up an old-fashioned chimney of tiny bricks.

A chandelier constructed of a cluster of thorns swung from the center of the ceiling. Around the principal branch curled a glow worm, while on

the point of each thorn was impaled a holly berry hollowed out and imprisoning a baby firefly imported from the summer time of other lands.

Mistletoe berries strung on dried grass blades festooned the chandeliers, with a branch of mistletoe leaves swinging below.

The spiders hung cobweb draperies over the walls to which they attached tiny wreaths; seats placed around the walls were covered with this-tledown left from last spring's thistles, over which were spread covering of woven pine needles.

Just beneath the chandelier was the greatest triumph of all—the fairy Christmas tree; a wee cedar garlanded with crimson and white berries, glittering with myriad fireflies, drooping with fairy gifts, and quaintest, tiniest cobweb stockings. Chains formed of particles of sand strung together, like diamonds, held the gifts in place.

When the gala time, Christmas night, arrived, the excitement was at fever heat.

The Queen and Brighteyes had intimated that Marco had prepared a genuine surprise of the nature of which even Florita and the Maid-of-Honor were to be ignorant. The guesses and speculation increased as the night advanced and the elf had not appeared.

The fairy folk spent the interval admiring each other in wintry attire.

No gossamer skirts now, if you please, but heavy silken garments lined with down of dandelions and fashioned by the skillful Mrs. Silkworm; feather boas made from the neck feathers of the humming bird; shoes and gloves of holly berry skins, and warmest cobweb hoods.

The lights shone brightly and, as the fairies

became merrier, in marched the Bee Brothers' Band, and the Cricket Chorus. Suddenly, amid the wildest commotion and shouts of tinkling fairy laughter, who should appear coming down the wall precisely like he was right out of the chimney, but a fairy Santa Claus!

Hurrah! but he was a picture! Marco, the elf, in a bit of white rabbit skin with a mere speck of a rabbit's cotton tail for a Santa Claus beard.

He kept his wings folded so they would not interfere with the traditional pack that he bore on his back.

How they cheered, and how merrily the rogue's eyes twinkled as he deposited his pack on the floor, turned and gave a whistle like a signal.

Immediately, in answer to the call, there pranced through the door and around the tree, their pincers held high like antlers, eight beetle reindeer drawing a walnut shell sleigh.

The sleigh caused almost as much amusement as the Santa himself, even the beetles smiling broadly and entering into the game with zest.

Santa Claus now began the distribution of the presents, consisting of moth-wing fans, feather boas, thorn and bee-sting swords, acorn punch bowls and many other things.

The hour grew late and the fairies agreed that even ethereal beings, such as they, must needs be fed.

Gaily they gathered around a sycamore bark dining table, spread with silken cloth and glittering with fish-scale plate.

Queen Florita presided at the head of the table, with Princess Brighteyes at her right and Santa Claus Marco at the foot.

In front of the Queen was a minnow roasted whole with a holly berry in its mouth.

There were canary birds' tongue, holly berry salad served in the berry on a bit of holly leaf, apple seed fritters and acorn croquettes.

This was followed by mistletoe berry ice and bottled nectar. Black imps from Imptown, in white coats and aprons, attended on their wants.

Strains of music were heard from the corner where the potted cedar screened the musicians from view.

The Bee Brothers' Band began a plaintive melody, and forth on the air came a Christmas carol sung by the Cricket Chorus.

This brought forth rounds of applause and the little folk hurried from the table and cleared the floor for dancing.

Marco chose the Princess Brighteyes for his partner in the dance.

Dear, dear!

Poor mortals grow vain of their dancing, but 'tis nothing to the airy tripping of those flying fairy feet. Waltz followed one-step in quick succession, then as finale, the grand march.

Now the dance is over.

The gay revelers hurry home, the tired fireflies sleep at their posts and the beetles lie down in their harness.

The decorations are drooping, the fire smolders, and even the little Santa Claus dreams.

MARCO ADOPTS A FAMILY

MARCO lay down in the heart of a rose to rest a bit. It was a soft, pink rose and the petals were like velvet. The day was cool and the gypsy-elf drew the warm petals about his little body and went to sleep. Just how long he had slept he did not know, when he felt a sharp prick in his side.

My! what a wrench that was; then another and another.

By this time the small gypsy was wide awake and very angry. Who was it, anyhow, that dared to so rudely disturb a gentleman in his nap by pricks in the side which were almost stabs?

The indignant elf arose and, catching up his elfin wand which lay by his side, threw off the enveloping rose petals and stepped out into the sunlight to acquaint himself with his unknown enemy.

Aha! there she was.

A lady humming bird, who, on a search for nectar and insects in the heart of the rose found, instead, a very brown and angry elf. On perceiving Marco with wand upheld, the humming bird, nothing daunted, again swooped upon the rose with sudden whirr of wings and eager bill. Then Marco, too indignant to consider the result of his action, drew three circles about his head with the wand and, thrusting it suddenly toward the luckless bird, she fell with feeble flutterings

to the ground. Not until the bird had ceased to struggle did the gypsy-elf realize the terrible extent to which his anger had been carried. Then in a spasm of remorse he flew swiftly to the ground and bent over the little dead bird. Its glittering crimson, green, and gold plumage, its dusky wings and wide spreading tail lay flat and motionless in the dust, its pretty eyes were half closed and its little feet turned upward.

Marco was a tender hearted elf, and immediately on realizing the extent of the harm done, the pathetic possibility suddenly occurred to him of the humming bird's having a hungry family for which to provide. No sooner had this thought come to him, than also the resolve to find and care for them himself. Knowing the habits of the birds, Marco remembered that the father humming bird rarely troubles himself to look after his brood. Then, too, it was due to the elf's own wicked temper that the little birds were left to battle with the world alone and motherless. Had he permitted her to live and continue her search for insect food for them, all might have yet been well.

The repentant elf then lifted the pretty crest of feathers about the little mother's neck to see if there were any clew to her dwelling place. He recalled that lady humming birds of fashion often wore their names and addresses stamped on their feathers. Lifting the wing he discovered it in letters of gold on the under side of one of the dusky feathers:

Mrs. Tom Inejo,
No. 2 Althea Avenue West,
Briarcliff Garden.

Marco knew Briarcliff Garden very well, it being the home of many of his friends, the flower-dwelling fairies; and if this were the bird's home no doubt he would find it without trouble. First, the bird must be buried, and to this sad task the tiny gypsy immediately applied himself. Finding a long, soft cobweb festooning a branch of the rose bush, Marco manfully struggled to raise the body of the bird enough to wind the web gently about it. Afterward he plucked a large thorn from the bush and dug the grave, lining it with soft moss and the pink petals of the rose.

Calling a passing beetle to his assistance, they placed the bird in a curly bit of sycamore bark and lowered it into the rose and green resting place.

Then they rapidly filled the grave, and the rose bush kindly showered down more velvet petals until it was quite hidden in a rosy cloud. Marco then fashioned a head stone by fastening several thorns together, the point of each attached to the top of the one before, forming a pretty cross. This done, he thanked the accommodating beetle and rose into the air on his fleet wings to search for the home of the humming bird. After an hour's rapid flight, the great stone entrance gates of Briarcliff Garden came into view. Up and down the avenues of flowers he went, calling greetings to the fairy inhabitants, but always shaking his head, in refusal, to their proffers of hospitality.

Marco had no time for social pleasures now. He was a wicked elf who had killed an innocent bird and for the present, at least, his duty was plain before him. He must find her home and

provide for her family should there chance to be one.

Here was Althea Avenue West, at last; yes—and here was number two. Sure enough the beautiful nest, fashioned of softest cobweb and down from the dandelion, was hanging from a bush right before his eyes. About the outer rim were bits of lichen in fantastic and beautiful figures. As Marco drew near he whirled his wings, and the two baby birds in the nest, quite blind as yet to the outer world, opened expectant mouths in anticipation of the food that usually followed their parent's return.

Here was a problem.

They must be fed and the elf had brought nothing.

He fluttered into the nearest althea cup, and impaling several insects on the point of his wand and dipping them into nectar to be sweetened to taste, he returned to the nest, remembering to make the same noise with his wings to keep the birdies reassured. Into the hungry mouths he dropped the candied bugs.

Seeing that the nest needed quite a lot of cleaning, he rocked the birdlets to sleep by swaying his body enough to move the nest gently to and fro. Even baby humming birds were great in size in comparison with the gypsy-elf.

Marco tied his head in his gypsy kerchief, and taking some feathers he fastened them together and proceeded to sweep and dust the tumbled nest. While engaged in these duties he decided that some respect was due the memory of the departed mother bird. He engaged a spider to weave festoons of black cobweb over the althea

bush until the humming bird's death became known.

There was a gathering of his fairy friends, on hearing that Marco had adopted the humming bird's family and taken up his abode in her nest, to care for the young until they were self supporting. In vain did the fairies argue that this was an unnecessary sacrifice. He had not purposely killed the bird, but did it on an impulse of self-defense; but Marco invariably replied that he was there to stay. The birdlets were his adopted babies and he proposed to care for them.

King Sylvas passed once in his aeroplane and used all his royal authority to enforce Marco's attendance at court, and the desertion of his feathered family; but all to no avail. The birdlets grew and thrived, and when their bulging round eyes opened on the world, innocently regarded their elfin nurse as a careful parent.

In return for his care and daily foraging tours for food and drink, the birdlets gave him all the affection of their orphaned hearts, and not understanding the bird language very well, Marco carefully instructed them daily in the elfin tongue. During their lesson each day there came a company of laughing elves and fairies, flying about the althea bush, or seating themselves on the rim of the nest, to hear the extraordinary sound of birds speaking their own tongue.

Marco had arranged an extra room for himself in the althea cup, next branch to the nest.

During their infancy he had carefully covered the babies with the tropical feathered skin of a long dead humming bird. This skin he had gotten with much risk from a gnome who lived in

the woods and sold humming bird skins and feathers for money. Marco, however, took pains to conceal from the gnome the fact that he was rearing two brilliant plumaged birds of his own, else, in his greed for gain, the feather merchant might have robbed the nest of the fledglings and killed them for their feathers.

About his swinging tent and over the nest, Marco had hung awnings of striped grass, and as soon as they withered they were replaced by more. Number two Althea Avenue West became the rendezvous of all the cultured fairies and elves, but the humming birds renounced the orphan birds as aliens from their kind. Whenever one passed the nest she would turn her head, holding her long bill contemptuously in the air. They had never forgiven the killing of the mother bird, and had confided to their bird friends that Marco had merely kidnapped the baby hummers when they were too young to understand. They accused him of raising them to sell their feathers to the gnome trader, or else to exhibit them as trained talking birds. Marco kept quiet at these cruel words and refused to quarrel with the stranger humming birds and so the language lessons went on in the cosy nest.

It was a great grief to the gypsy-elf that the voices of his charges could not be cultivated. Marco was very musical and would have enjoyed having song birds in the nest but humming birds do not sing. He was forced to content himself with teaching them to speak. This was no small task and, in spite of his most careful instruction, each bird spoke with quite a foreign accent.

The birds saw nothing unusual in the condi-

tion, and having never known their own parents, they did not realize the difference between themselves and the pretty little people who were their daily companions. Whenever either bird spoke of himself as an elf, the real elves went off into peals of tinkling laughter. They realized that with the approach of maturity this funny illusion of the birds must be dispelled.

Finally the day came when they must be taught to fly, and here again their elfin teacher was put to new embarrassment. Humming birds must fly humming-bird fashion, with noisy whirr of wing, and, try as he would, Marco could only make his own dainty wings buzz very softly, and for only a few moments at a time.

The gypsy-elf sat on the rim of the nest, his elbows on his knees and his tiny chin in his hands. His feet in their pointed elfin shoes swung idly and his long black locks were tangled and unkempt. This problem of raising a family had become too great for one inexperienced elf, without any responsibility of any kind heretofore. On each side of him perched one of his charges. They were growing rapidly and their plumage was of such tropical brilliancy and jeweled sheen as might well have made the old gnome envious. Now and then each passed his long bill lovingly through Marco's uncombed locks or spread a protecting wing about his tiny form.

At last a bright thought came.

It was true that the other humming birds would not associate with his birdlets, laughingly referred to by the fairies as "Marco's twins,"

but the elf had just remembered that a hermit humming bird of sober plumage and renowned as a seer, lived in a quiet gray nest which drooped under a protecting palm leaf, not many flights away. He would go to the hermit and ask for help in his dilemma. Pushing the birds back into the nest and forbidding their leaving it until his return, off he went to the hermit's home.

The modest seer was in, and received the elf with grave courtesy, notwithstanding the fact that Marco was still regarded with disfavor by the hermit's kindred.

Then Marco in his most engaging manner explained the condition of affairs to the humming bird.

Now the hermit was also a priest, and having heard the confessions of many erring birds, he was better able to understand the acute conscience that had caused the irresponsible gypsy-elf to assume charge of two orphaned birds in expiation for the crime of killing their parent. Marco explained, that even understanding the humming bird's tongue fairly well, an elf could not be expected to speak it correctly enough to enable him to teach it to a native. Then, too, if he taught the birds to fly, they would fly after the elfin fashion, and without the musical wing tones of their own kind.

The hermit must understand the difficulties under which the well meaning and contrite elf was laboring.

After much argument and with many winning ways the elf finally prevailed, and the little priest hummer promised to take charge of the education

of Marco's twins, thus relieving the elf of all responsibility.

This load off the elfin shoulders, the hermit and the gypsy-elf flew back to Marco's nest side by side. During the return journey they passed many humming birds who stared in surprise, first angrily, then gradually with softening gaze. If the elf had received absolution from the Hermit-Father for his sin, they, too, could afford to be forgiving. Arrived at the home nest, many elves and fairies came over to assist in preparing the young birds for their departure.

The plan was for the birds to go to the hermit's home until they could learn to fly and speak like the others of their family, then they would be able to face the world alone.

What a tearful time they had when the hour for departure came! The young birds wept and would not understand the reason for separating them from the only home and parent they had ever known. In vain did they chatter their reasons in the elfin tongue to the hermit, who could only bow and smile with his long bill, and try to explain to the hot headed youngsters that elfin talk by bird tongues was unintelligible to bird ears.

Humming birds are great fighters, and Marco was forced to use his authority to keep his twins from a furious encounter with the sober little priest bird. The poor hummer, having lived a hermit so long was totally unprepared for this, and had he not been a priestly bird, might have been forced into using his own battling qualities. After much scolding and persuading the young birds at last agreed to go, and as they

were yet unable to use their own wings, the fairies and elves, assisted by Marco and the hermit, detached the nest from the althea bush with the twins safe inside. They bore it off in triumph like a basket to a balloon. The elves made a variegated body guard and they attracted the most marked attention from the humming birds on arrival at the gray nest of the hermit. Here the home nest was attached to the hermitage and the twins were left, the big tears rolling out of their eyes at parting from Marco, but big smiles in their bills at the kindness shown to two orphaned birds.

Marco agreed to come to see them once each day until they were grown.

Then back went the elves and fairies to Briar-cliff Garden, taking Marco as their guest.

That night at a farewell dinner given in his honor by the little folks, Marco assured them that now his crime was expiated, and his birds had flown, he felt "like a humming bird out of a cage."



The Gypsy Elf and his bride were borne softly forth on the bosom of a forest stream in a pea-shell boat.

THE WEDDING

THE Kingdoms of Fairyland and Elfland were in a flutter of anticipation. Excitement was at fever heat, and all because the word had gone abroad that beautiful Florita, Queen of the Fairies, and King Sylvas, ruler of Elfland, were to be married. Yes, indeed, the affair was one of national importance. The kingdoms had been entirely separate before, but now this royal alliance bade fair to make two countries one great whole.

True, they had been on most friendly terms for quite a fairy's lifetime, but the idea of becoming one nation had never entered their little minds.

The ladies among both elves and fairies were chiefly occupied with the gowns to be worn, but the gentlemen were hard at work arranging all state matters likely to be affected by the wedding.

Rev. Mr. Jack — yes, Jack-in-the-Pulpit — was to be the officiating minister. Brighteyes, chief Lady-in-Waiting to the Queen, was to be the maid of honor. All friendly insects were invited, and every bird who was interested. It was to be a sylvan affair in especial compliment to the bridegroom. The spot selected for the ceremony was the very top of a large moss-covered rock. The rock was quite as high as the stump

of a tree, and the moss covering was soft, thick and green.

The fairies engaged spiders to fasten cobweb rope ladders on every side of the rock, from its summit to the ground. Of course the little people could have used their own pretty wings to fly to the top, but as they were making wedding preparations they could not risk becoming tired.

Many humming birds and dragon flies came each day to aid in carrying the little workers up and down. A particularly friendly robin red-breast also proved of great assistance. His back was broad and the fairy folk persuaded him to act as a sort of elevator. All day the faithful bird flew up and down, each time laden with necessities, or decorations for beautifying the unique chapel. A series of arches were erected across the rock. These arches were twined with greenery, and from the center of the foremost was hung a lily wedding bell. The pulpit of Mr. Jack, with its green canopied top, was to the left of the altar. Two moss-green kneeling cushions were just in front of a low chancel rail. This rail was made of grapevine tendrils, and the main aisle leading to it was a wide blade of striped grass.

Black imps went about with bunches of feathers from the neck of a humming bird. The feathers were dipped in honeysuckle nectar and shaken over the moss carpet and tree bark pews, spreading the most delicious fragrance.

A reed organ formed of tiny hollow reeds, and with the smallest keyboard ever seen, was on the opposite side of the altar from the pulpit.

A large frog of astonishing lung power was engaged to act as bellows. When the organ began to play his breath supplied the wind.

The great night arrived!

Phosphorous, damp enough to send forth a luminous glow for many fairy miles, was rubbed over every side of the rock.

The dragonfly aeroplane of King Sylvas, aglow with firefly lights, was anchored at one side to bear the little couple away. Marco, the gypsy elf, with all his gypsy band, occupied seats inside the white ribbon, exactly as if he were a prince of the realm. The Fairy Echo sat beside the organ, prepared to echo the tones of the wedding march.

The elfin guests, attired in their rustic reds and browns, and with black eyes shining, arrived at exactly the same moment with the white and gold fairies. Two gentlemen, one an elfin courtier, the other a fairy in black pansy evening dress, acted as ushers; while the organ was presided over by one of the humming birds that Marco had reared. It pleased Marco greatly to see him there, for the gypsy-elf had been much disappointed that his charges had not learned to sing. Now this one had done even a better thing, for he was an organist of renown.

The bird used his long bill to manage the organ stops, his own little toes to play the keys, while a centipede very kindly consented to use his feet for the pedals. Playing the organ after this fashion became an easier matter than for a poor mortal with only the usual supply of hands and feet.

The notes of the wedding march sounded.

The frog bellows puffed with all his breath and the centipede traveled up and down. Echo opened her red lips and sang back each tone, and the sides of the rock chapel became black with interested insect spectators. The branches of the trees were thronged with birds, many using field glasses to bring the scene a bit nearer. A snap-dragon had to be arrested and confined in a frog hole, because in his excitement he snapped too loud.

The wedding party entered.

First came the vested Cricket Choir, then the elfin and fairy ushers. When they were half way up the aisle two mites of lady bridesmaids came, an elf and fairy, each in her typical national dress. The elf wore the green of her woodland, wearing a cap made of the skin of a scarlet berry. The fairy wore a gown of yellow jasmine petals. Next came an elf baby boy, bearing the ring, and a fairy baby girl, scattering tiny forget-me-nots. Brighteyes, the Maid-of-Honor, in a carnation pink gown, entered and was followed by Florita, the lovely Queen bride.

All white she was, her golden hair shimmering beneath a valley lily cap and cobweb bridal veil. Her wedding gown was made of velvet bride rose petals, and powdered with star dust that shone like diamonds.

She entered alone.

At the altar she was met by King Sylvas and his best man.

Rev. Mr. Jack performed the solemn ceremony according to the fairy ritual, that made them man and wife.

After the vows were spoken, to the surprise

of all present, the King and Queen, joint rulers of the United Kingdoms, did not retrace their steps down the aisle.

No, indeed!

Instead, they stepped to one side, and Bright-eyes moved near the organ where sat the Fairy Echo. Taking her by the hand, Brighteyes conducted her back to the Queen. Florita, with much grace and the sweetest of smiles, lifted the cap and veil from her own head and placed them on the lowered one of Echo.

The best man meantime moved down the aisle, and with much dignity, escorted Marco from his seat behind the ribbon to the side of the pretty fairy. Somehow neither of them seemed surprised. Then it was that the onlookers almost forgot that they were in church, for by this time it was apparent to all that another wedding was in progress.

Had it not been for a warning wave of the ministerial hand of Mr. Jack, there would have followed too much excitement for decorum, but at this signal they fell back into their seats.

Again the ceremony was pronounced, again two tiny folk knelt for the blessing, and when the wedding march pealed forth once more, two happy couples responded to its strains.

The audience rose in a body.

Gone was royal ceremony, forgotten was churchly deportment. The applause was prolonged, the uproar deafening.

As the aeroplane bearing the royal pair swung out into the night from the summit of the rock, a more modest embarkation took place at its base.

The gypsy-elf and his bride were borne softly

forth on the bosom of a forest stream, in a pea-shell boat; Marco, himself, handling the oars.

The voyage of life was beginning for four happy hearts. Above, the courtiers applauded the King and Queen. Below, the gypsy band on the bank of the stream, cast a long-pointed elfin shoe in the wake of the fairy boat, and gave three cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Marco.

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